DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 289 094 CG 020 360

AUTHOR Gerdes, Eugenia Proctor; And Others
TITLE Race and Sex Discrimination in Hiring: Effects of Subject Sex and Job Status.
PUB DATE Apr 86
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Eastern Psychological Association (New York, NY, April 17-20, 1986).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS College Students; *Employment Level; *Employment Qualifications; Higher Education; *Personnel Selection; *Racial Bias; Racial Discrimination; *Sex Bias; Sex Discrimination; Student Attitudes; *White Students

ABSTRACT

Research has demonstrated that discrimination against women does not occur for all high status traditionally male job positions; bias seems most likely when ambiguity in the evaluation process requires evaluators to resort to their stereotypes in order to predict performance. The same line of reasoning may apply to blacks or other minority candidates for high status traditionally white male positions. This study investigated the effect of job status on racial discrimination as well as on sex discrimination in the same hiring situation. It also examined whether own-sex favoritism in evaluations would extend to black candidates. White male and female college students (N=64) evaluated job candidates. Candidates and job descriptions varied on whether they were appropriate for high status or low status positions. Candidates also differed in race and gender. This 2x2x2x2 design yielded several three-way interactions. Information about the candidate affected perceptions of the job status and clarity of candidate description, as well as the candidates' qualifications for the job. Subjects tended to prefer their own gender for the high status job but to prefer the same-sexed black person when both jobs were considered. Regardless of job status, subjects were willing to hire the candidates, with the striking exception that male subjects rejected most of the the black female candidates. (Author/NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED289094

RACE AND SEX DISCRIMINATION IN HIRING: EFFECTS OF SUBJECT SEX AND JOB STATUS

Eugenia Proctor Gerdes, Mary Dominguez, Rosa Joshi, & Rebecca Miner

Bucknell University

White male and female subjects evaluated job candidates. Candidates and job descriptions varied on whether they were appropriate for high status (manager) or low status (aide) positions. Candidates also differed in race and gender. This 2 x 2 x 2 x 2 design yielded several three-way interactions. Information about the candidate affected perceptions of the job status and clarity of candidate description, as well as the candidates' qualifications for the job. Subjects tended to prefer their own gender for the high status job but to prefer the same-sexed Black person when both jobs were considered. Regardless of job status, subjects were willing to hire the candidates--with the striking exception that male subjects rejected most of the Black female candidates.

CG 020360

Presented at Eastern Psychological Association meetings, New York, April 1986.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Eugenia P. Gerdes

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Race and Sex Discrimination in Hiring: Effects of Subject Sex and Job Status

Eugenia Proctor Gerdes, Mary C. Dominguez, Rosa Joshi, & Rebecca Miner

Bucknell University

Presented at Eastern Psychological Association meetings, New York, April 1986.

Studies in which college students or managers are asked to rate typical men and women or typical male and female workers generally find that women are expected to have characteristics that are more suited for low-level clerical jobs than for higher status professional or managerial professions (e.g., Rosen & Jerdee, 1978). Likewise, experiments comparing evaluations of candidates who are identical except for their gender provide evidence that discrimination reduces women's access to traditionally male jobs (e.g., Terborg, 1977), and particularly to the more demanding traditionally male jobs (Gerdes & Garber, 1983; Rosen & Jerdee, 1974).

Gerdes and Garber (1983) found that discrimination against women does not occur for all high status traditionally male positions; bias seems most likely when ambiguity in the evaluation process requires evaluators to resort to their stereotypes in order to predict performance. In their study, identical male and female candidates were evaluated equally for an engineering position for which they were clearly qualified. In contrast, adding specific managerial tasks to the job description that were not addressed in the application materials resulted in significantly higher ratings for male than for female candidates. The authors make two points that are quite relevant to the present study. First, rather than an overall bias against women, the evaluators (second and third level managers) exhibited a more subtle bias--stereotypical evaluations when the situation was ambiguous. Second, higher status positions are more likely than low status positions to have requirements that, as well as being stereotypically male, create ambiguity by going beyond the candidate's demonstrated abilities.

The same line of reasoning may apply to blacks or other minority candidates for high status traditionally white-male positions. Obviously, stereotypes of blacks that imply they are less suited for such positions still exist, although blatant racism has become socially undesireable (e.g., Myers, 1983). Thus, stereotypical evaluations of blacks may occur primarily for high status positions that are traditionally white-male and where it is not clear from application materials whether the candidate has all the capabilities needed for the job. Black females could be doubly penalized, by both stereotypes, when applying under such conditions. Rather that investigating stereotypical work evaluations, research on differential treatment of blacks generally takes a more general, intergroup approach (see Austin & Worchel, 1979). Myers' (1983) review emphasizes subtle biases in both racism and sexism but includes no studies on racial discrimination in work evaluations; in contrast, 20 studies of gender disrimination in work evalutions were found relevant. One purpose of the present study was to investigate the effect of job status on racial discrimination as well as on sex discrimination in the same hiring situation.

The current study also includes both male and female evaluators as subjects. Gerdes and Kelman (1981) found that both male and female white evaluators, who were given little information about a candidate, preferred the male candidate for traditionally male jobs and the female candidate for traditionally female jobs; however, each gender believed the candidate of its own sex to be more capable of performing sex-role incongruent tasks than the candidate of the opposite sex. Thus, own-sex favoritism was found in addition to stereotypical evaluations. The current study investigated whether own-sex favoritism in evaluations would extend to black candidates.

METHOD

Subjects

Volunteers (32 male and 32 female) from the psychology subject pool at a

private comprehensive university served as subjects. All subjects were white. Subjects participated in groups that were heterogeneous as to subject gender and other experimental conditions.

Procedure

Subjects were lead to believe that the experiment was a pretest for a study of decision-making processes in personnel managers. They believed their opinions of a job description and candidate description were needed for that study.

Each subject read one of two descriptions of a job at a recreational resort. One described the responsibilities of a low status position, Activities Aide, which included care and cleaning of equipment and facilities, coordinating refreshments with the kitchen, and distributing schedules. This job required a high school degree and good interpersonal skills. The high status position was the Activities Director, responsible for planning, staff, and budget for the department and for customer safety and satisfaction. This job required a college degree, preferably a B.S. in management, and excellent verbal and written skills.

Each subject read one candidate description. Each candidate for the Activities Aide was identical except for sex and race. This candidate was a recent high school graduate (B- average) with work experience at a fast food restaurant; the candidate was described as hardworking, outgoing, and friendly, and as belonging to two clubs and participating in track. The candidate for the high status job had recently received a B.S. in management from New York University with a 3.0 average. This candidate had worked as a student assistant to the management department, a resident assistant, and a summer intern at an insurance company. The characteristics personable, outgoing, and self-motivated were listed, as well as membership in two clubs and the track team.

The gender of the applicant was manipulated by the first name, Mark or Judy. The race of the applicant was manipulated by making black candidates members of their high school or university Society of Black Students, as opposed to a general

service club in the case of white candidates.

Subjects' evaluations were measured by asking whether, if in the position to do so, they would hire or not hire the candidate. In addition, subjects were asked to rate how qualified the candidate was for the job on a scale from 1 (extremely unqualified) to 7 (extremely qualified). Other questions on the same scale were included to lend credibility to the cover story or for manipulation checks. They dealt with how well the candidate description fit the job description, the clarity of the job description, the clarity of the candidate description, and the perceived status of the job.

RESULTS

The two jobs were perceived differently. All groups reading about the high status job rated it on the high status side of the mid-point, and all groups reading about the low status job rated it on the low status side of the mid-point. However, the perception of status varied with the description of the candidate, yielding a marginally significant interaction, $F = 3.85$, $p < .055$ (See Table 1). This interaction and the fact that the two jobs did not differ on ratings of ambiguity (how well the candidate description fit the job description) complicate the interpretation of the effects of job status. In addition, there was a significant three-way interaction, $F = 4.98$, $p < .03$, on ratings of the clarity of the candidate description; this interaction involved every factor except job status, which was the largest real difference in the descriptions (See Table 2).

On the dichotomous choice of whether to hire the candidate, the job status did not make a difference. The decisions of male subjects concerning black female candidates were unique; they were significantly different from males' decisions abut black male and white male candidates and significantly different from decisions of female subjects concerning the black female candidate, $p < .025$ by Fisher's exact test (See Table 3).

There were no significant effects involving race on the ratings of the

candidate's qualification for the job. A three-way interaction of job status, candidate sex, and subject sex was significant, $F = 6.00$, $p < .018$. As can be seen in Table 4, each gender favored its own sex in ratings for the high status job. Differences in ratings for the high and low status jobs were most pronounced for female subjects, who tended to prefer male candidates for the lower status job. Another three-way interaction approached significance ($p < .109$) and will be presented because of its relevance to the dichotomous decisions concerning hiring. Male and female subjects differed in the pattern of their ratings of white and black male and female candidates. As shown in Table 5, male subjects tended to prefer black male candidates to black females; however, although black females were usually rejected in the dichotomous hiring decision, their average rating is not much worse than that given to white females or white males. The pattern of female subjects shows greater discrimination, but with the black female and white male receiving the most favorable ratings.

DISCUSSION

The two job-candidate combinations did not differ in their ambiguity about the candidate's ability to meet the job requirements in this experiment; nor did they differ in a follow-up study in which race and gender cues were absent from the candidate description and different questions were used to assess ambiguity. Thus, job status comparisons did not compare discrimination for two jobs differing in ambiguity. Although we had believed that the high school graduate would appear clearly qualified for the low status job, both job-candidate combinations were perceived as moderately ambiguous.

Differential evaluations according to race and sex of candidate did occur. The mechanisms underlying these discriminatory evaluations are difficult to understand because knowledge of the candidate's race and sex affected even perceptions of the clarity of the candidate description and the status of the job. This represents a subtle bias in which perceptions of the whole hiring situation

are changed by knowledge of the candidate's race and gender. For example, the managerial job was seen as higher status for the black female than for other candidates, and the aide job was seen as lower status for other candidates than it would be for a black male. Stereotypes and ambiguity certainly do not completely explain the results of this study, but they could explain two other race effects--that is, if low clarity of the candidate description indicates ambiguity. First, male subjects rated the descriptions of black females and white males as least clear; given this lack of clarity, they decided in favor of hiring the white male in 7 out of 8 decisions but in favor of hiring the black female in only 2 out of 8 decisions. The uniqueness of these dichotomous hiring decisions for black females is even more striking in light of the male subjects giving them qualifications ratings that were similar to other candidates'; perhaps being slightly qualified still leaves some ambiguity about the actual hiring decision, ambiguity which is resolved in the direction of prevailing stereotypes. Second, still relevant to ambiguity but less certainly involving stereotypes, the three-way interaction on clarity of the candidate description was related to the similar interaction on the qualified question. Using the clarity ratings as covariates actually eliminated the marginal subject sex x candidate sex x race interaction. From the current data, it is not possible to determine whether perceiving a candidate's description as clearer preceded or followed more favorable impressions of qualifications, or whether another variable is involved.

There were other striking sex differences in subjects' evaluations besides those on the hiring decision itself. Ratings of qualifications tended to favor one's own sex for the high status job. However, the three-way interaction involving race indicated that, over both jobs, the preferred same sex candidate was the black person. In fact, considering both jobs, female subjects rated their own group, white female candidates, the worst. Explication of this and other results will be addressed in future research.

REFERENCES

Austin, W. G., & Worchel, S. (1979). The psychology of intergroup relations. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.

Gerdes, E. P., & Garber, D. M. (1983). Sex bias in hiring: Effects of job demands and applicant competence. Sex Roles, 9, 307-319.

Gerdes, E. P., & Kelman, J. H. (1981). Sex discrimination: Effects of sex-role incongruence, evaluator sex, and stereotypes. Basic and Applied Social Psychology, 2, 219-226.

Myers, D. G. (1983). Social psychology. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Rosen, B., & Jerdee, T. H. (1974). Effects of applicant's sex and difficulty of job on evaluations of candidates for managerial positions. Journal of Applied Psychology, 59, 511-512.

Rosen, B., & Jerdee, T. H. (1978). Perceived sex characteristics in managerially relevant characteristics. Sex Roles, 6, 837-843.

TABLE 1-Ratings of Job Status

CANDIDATE SEX:	Male		Female	
CANDIDATE RACE:	White	Black	White	Black
JOB STATUS:				
High	5.00	4.75	4.50	5.50
Low	2.88	3.63	3.00	2.88

TABLE 2--Ratings of Clarity of Candidate Description

SUBJECT SEX:	Male		Female	
CANDIDATE SEX:	Male	Female	Male	Female
CANDIDATE RACE:				
White	4.00	4.63	4.13	3.50
Black	4.63	3.63	4.13	5.38

TABLE 3--Dichotomous Hiring Decisions

CANDIDATE:	White Male		White Female		Black Male		Black Female	
DECISION:	Hire	No	Hire	No	Hire	No	Hire	No
SUBJECT SEX:								
Male	7	1	5	3	8	0	2	6
Female	7	1	6	2	7	1	7	1

TABLE 4--Ratings of How Qualified Candidate is for Job

JOB STATUS:	High		Low	
SUBJECT SEX:	Male	Female	Male	Female
CANDIDATE SEX:				
Male	5.25	4.25	4.88	5.50
Female	4.63	5.25	5.00	4.25

TABLE 5--Ratings of How Qualified Candidate is for Job

SUBJECT SEX:	Male		Female	
CANDIDATE SEX:	Male	Female	Male	Female
CANDIDATE RACE:				
White	5.00	4.88	5.13	4.13
Black	5.13	4.75	4.63	5.38